

Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Valley Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire-safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Valley Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$812,000 which it used to help build an addition and make renovations to provide science labs and a computer lab. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$75,000 to make safety improvements throughout the district.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Valley Community School District. In particular, I'd like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Rick Klann, Dawn Daughton, Dr. DeWayne Frazier, Mark Howard, Mick Olson and former board members Gregg Kleppe, Allen Knox, Celeste Strong, and Lois Dummermuth. I would also like to recognize superintendent Cathleen Molumby, and the many volunteers and members of the School Improvement Advisory Committee.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have got to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Valley Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:57 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 6169. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15455 Manchester Road in Ballwin, Missouri, as the "Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building".

H.R. 6513. An act to amend the Federal securities laws to enhance the effectiveness of the Securities and Exchange Commission's enforcement, corporation finance, trading and markets, investment management, and examination programs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6608. An act to provide for the replacement of lost income for employees of the House of Representatives who are members of a Reserve component of the Armed Forces who are on active duty for a period of more than 30 days, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6832. An act to authorize major medical facility projects and major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2009, to extend certain authorities of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD) announced that on September 11, 2008, he had signed the following enrolled bill, previously signed by the Speaker of the House:

H.R. 6532. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restore the Highway Trust Fund balance.

At 11:55 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 6475. An act to establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 6169. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15455 Manchester Road in Ballwin, Missouri, as the "Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 6475. An act to establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

H.R. 6513. An act to amend the Federal securities laws to enhance the effectiveness of the Securities and Exchange Commission's enforcement, corporation finance, trading and markets, investment management, and examination programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 6832. An act to authorize major medical facility projects and major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2009, to extend certain authorities of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-7564. A communication from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Maryland; NOx, and SO2 Emissions Limitations for Fifteen Coal-Fired Electric Generating Units" (FRL No. 8709-7) received on August 29, 2008; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-7565. A communication from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Utah; Revised Transportation Conformity Consultation Process, and Approval of Related Revisions" (FRL No. 8700-7) received on August 29, 2008; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-7566. A communication from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Bacillus subtilis GB03; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance" (FRL No. 8378-5) received on August 29, 2008; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-7567. A communication from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Dichlobenil; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 8377-7) received on August 29, 2008; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.